

The Next 25 Years

Screen Australia
Indigenous
Department
Strategy





Sweet Country

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Cover images: *Shed, Damari & Guyala, Spear, Redfern Now, Grace Beside Me, She Who Must Be Loved, Black Divaz, 8MMM Aboriginal Radio, Sweet Country, Ties That Bind.*

Pages 9 and 16: Images taken at the Screen Australia Indigenous Department 25th Anniversary celebrations, August 2018.
Photo credit Daniel Boud

Executive Summary

“The achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander screen storytellers have been extraordinary. Their visual narratives have filtered into the hearts and minds of local and international audiences, bringing an authentic sense of Australia’s psyche. There is no denying the power of these screen stories. They give voice to our communities, share our stories and help non-Indigenous audiences embrace Australia’s First Peoples.

Penny Smallacombe

Head of Indigenous, Screen Australia

The Indigenous Department is an essential area within Screen Australia, and has made culturally significant contributions to the Australian and international screen industry during the 26 years since its inception by the Australian Film Commission in 1993. Following consultation with members of Indigenous communities, the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programme was established to fund a series of short films. The department, fully staffed by Indigenous Australians, now funds critically acclaimed content across film, television and online, connects Indigenous content creators with local and global opportunities, and carefully develops emerging Indigenous talent through strategic special initiatives.

An important role of the department is to facilitate sharing of Indigenous Australians’ stories with diverse audiences - Indigenous communities, Australian viewers and international audiences. The importance of this interaction cannot be understated as a means to ensure that Indigenous Australians’ stories and culture are seen, shared and valued.

“Their existence is really important. Having a dedicated unit sends a clear signal to the rest of the industry that this is a group of storytellers and stories that we need to champion.

Indigenous Reference Group, February 2018 Meeting

The Indigenous Department of Screen Australia celebrated its 25th year in 2018. The department took the opportunity to reflect on past successes and look forward by creating a new strategy and areas of focus so it can continue to deliver its mission:

Screen Australia’s Indigenous Department identifies and nurtures talented Indigenous Australians to ensure their bold, distinctive voices are heard through the engaging stories they craft.

As part of this period of reflection, the Indigenous Department embarked on a collaborative, consultative and wide-ranging review of its current and future approach towards filmmaking. The department sought input from key stakeholders including recipients of Screen Australia funding and Indigenous members of the creative screen community, along with state and territory agencies, broadcasters and other key screen sector partners. Through this process, the department has identified key challenges and opportunities, and created a strategy that will guide the department in future years.

This process identified several key opportunities:

SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN THE INDUSTRY

This is a moment of change for the screen sector in Australia, as the industry responds to rapidly shifting trends in genre, platform and format. Digital disruption has created a national conversation about protecting Australian content, and taking up new and more diverse paths to audience and investment. These challenges and opportunities are particularly crucial for Indigenous practitioners.

RECOGNITION OF INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING ON SCREEN

In the past 10 years, Indigenous screen stories and creatives have achieved commercial success and international critical acclaim that has exceeded most expectations. This provides the entire sector with a springboard for even greater achievements, at home and abroad.

Diverse local and international audiences are viewing Indigenous screen content, often for the first time. This success has clear and crucial cultural impacts, and serves as a platform for further progress.

The success of Indigenous screen stories and screen practitioners is enabling greater connections and opportunities for all in the sector to access funding, build new relationships and continue to develop outstanding content.

HIGH ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS

Creating this strategy has provided detailed insights into the experiences of both practitioners and partners in the Australian screen industry. This process has provided an opportunity to review and translate the views of those who engage with the Indigenous Department into a meaningful and well-informed approach for improvement. These connections will support the department’s next steps.

The Indigenous screen sector has never been in better shape. But it still requires continued support. Success so far provides a hard-won platform to exploit new opportunities while adapting to new challenges.

The department has identified five key pillars that will underpin its future efforts:

1. **Indigenous storytelling**
2. **Identifying stories and talent**
3. **Developing talent**
4. **Connecting talent**
5. **Advocating for Indigenous representation and leadership.**

These five pillars will guide the department's decisionmaking as it allocates funding and builds closer collaborations with state and territory agencies and other sector stakeholders. This will support Indigenous screen storytellers to engage with the challenges and opportunities faced by a digitally enhanced sector.

For each of the pillars, key objectives and measurement recommendations are provided in detail. Importantly, the five pillars should be looked at concurrently, not as standalone activities. During the consultation process, all stakeholders recognised that the positive contribution that the Indigenous Department of Screen Australia can play relies on its ability to coordinate the efforts and focus of multiple groups. This collaborative approach is both unique and critical for the sustainability of the sector.

INITIAL PRIORITIES

The department has identified the following key initial priorities which overlap with all five strategic pillars:

1) Agreement to build a national framework for Indigenous professional development

Indigenous filmmakers are currently challenged by a fragmentation of approach, funding and strategy across multiple government and private agencies. Overlaps and gaps can confuse key talent and cause organisations to miss opportunities.

Screen Australia's Indigenous Department will formalise a national agreement between the department, all state and territory funding agencies, NITV, ABC Indigenous, AFTRS, industry guilds and Screen Producers Australia (SPA). The agreement will outline a commitment to collaboratively create and fund vital professional development opportunities for Indigenous writers, producers and directors, via clear career pathways, in all phases of their careers.

The Indigenous Department acknowledges that state and territory agencies, the guilds and SPA have varied funding priorities and remits, and already provide valuable professional development initiatives to Indigenous screen practitioners. A national agreement will enhance the work already done by:

- **Creating** a commonly used Talent Development Pathway, which defines various stages of career development and supports targeted programs, offering clarity to grassroots, emerging, mid-career and established talent
- **Leveraging** joint funding for special initiatives, attachment opportunities and other professional development activities. This collaborative funding can traverse current difficulties around funding certain activities

- **Collaborating** on a biannual Indigenous key creatives summit: a proposed two-day conference which would begin in 2020 and be hosted in a different state or territory on each occasion. The summit will build understanding and consensus around the National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development and allow practitioners to build networks, liaise with funding bodies and industry, and build their craft.

“We need structure in whatever area – you need that consistency of experience. It's about trying to give people a realistic framework of how to develop their careers.

Kelrick Martin, ABC Indigenous Unit

2) Investigate further corporate and philanthropic funding opportunities, including the creation of an Indigenous Screen Fund

The screen sector is increasingly affected by digital disruption, which generates new opportunities for creators and audiences, but also profoundly impacts long-standing business models. The Indigenous screen sector is particularly affected by these challenges, but has also reached a new level of global recognition and success.

To leverage recent successes and diversify funding sources, the department will further investigate corporate and philanthropic funding opportunities to assist the development, production and distribution of Indigenous screen stories, and fund professional development. The department sees a clear opportunity for corporate and philanthropic funds to support the development of talented Indigenous creatives by funding scholarships, attachments, placements and other professional development opportunities.

The department will work in the short term to build and enhance networks and partnerships, and in the long term, investigate the creation of an Indigenous Screen Fund.

The department also looks forward to implementing other recommendations, which are explored in 'Five strategic pillars' on page 9.



Occupation: Native

Background

Established in 1993 under the Australian Film Commission, the Indigenous Department of Screen Australia has supported and shared the stories of Indigenous Australians. Through the provision of funding and tailored professional development initiatives to Australian screen practitioners including directors, producers, writers and crew, the department has enabled the stories of Indigenous Australians to be told in creative, engaging and authentic ways to both domestic and international audiences.

As of June 2018, the Indigenous Department provided more than \$35 million in funding for development, production and talent escalation, and provided production funding to more than 160 titles. The department is now serving as a model for the Canada Media Fund and other Canadian screen agencies, as they design a Canadian Indigenous Screen Office.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programme (later called the Indigenous Branch) was established in 1993, as a result of consultation with Indigenous communities conducted by the Australian Film Commission in the previous year. The watershed *From Sand to Celluloid* initiative funded six Indigenous writer/directors to make their own short films, including a young Warwick Thornton with *Payback*, and Richard Frankland with *No Way to Forget*, which won Best Short Film at the 1996 AFI Awards and was selected for screening in the *Un Certain Regard* section of the Cannes Film Festival.

The department secured its own separate funding budget from 1996/97 after the success of *From Sand to Celluloid*. From 2001/02, the department supported both drama and documentary projects, and from 2006/07, the department made large investments in feature films and later television drama series. The department now allocates more than \$3 million each year.

Since its creation, the department has supported Indigenous Australians to gain control of their own screen stories. Department funding only goes to sole applicants who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians, or to projects where Indigenous Australians are in key creative roles, including a requirement that the writer and director must be Indigenous. The department has also helped to set industry guidelines for genuine Indigenous consultation, and the navigation of Indigenous protocols and intellectual property rights.

As the careers of Indigenous screen storytellers have grown, they have taken key roles in projects funded through different streams within Screen Australia that have reached broad audiences at home and abroad.

The Indigenous Department has had a dramatic impact on the visibility of Indigenous characters on screen. A 2002 study entitled *Broadcast in Colour* found that in the 1990s, there were very few Indigenous Australians in sustaining roles on Australian television. Screen Australia's 2016 study *Seeing Ourselves* revealed a remarkable shift: between 2011 and 2015, 5% of main characters in Australian television drama were Indigenous. The 5% figure matched exactly to the proportion of Indigenous actors in the period, suggesting authentic casting of Indigenous actors in Indigenous roles. This marked improvement is also credited to the department's ongoing

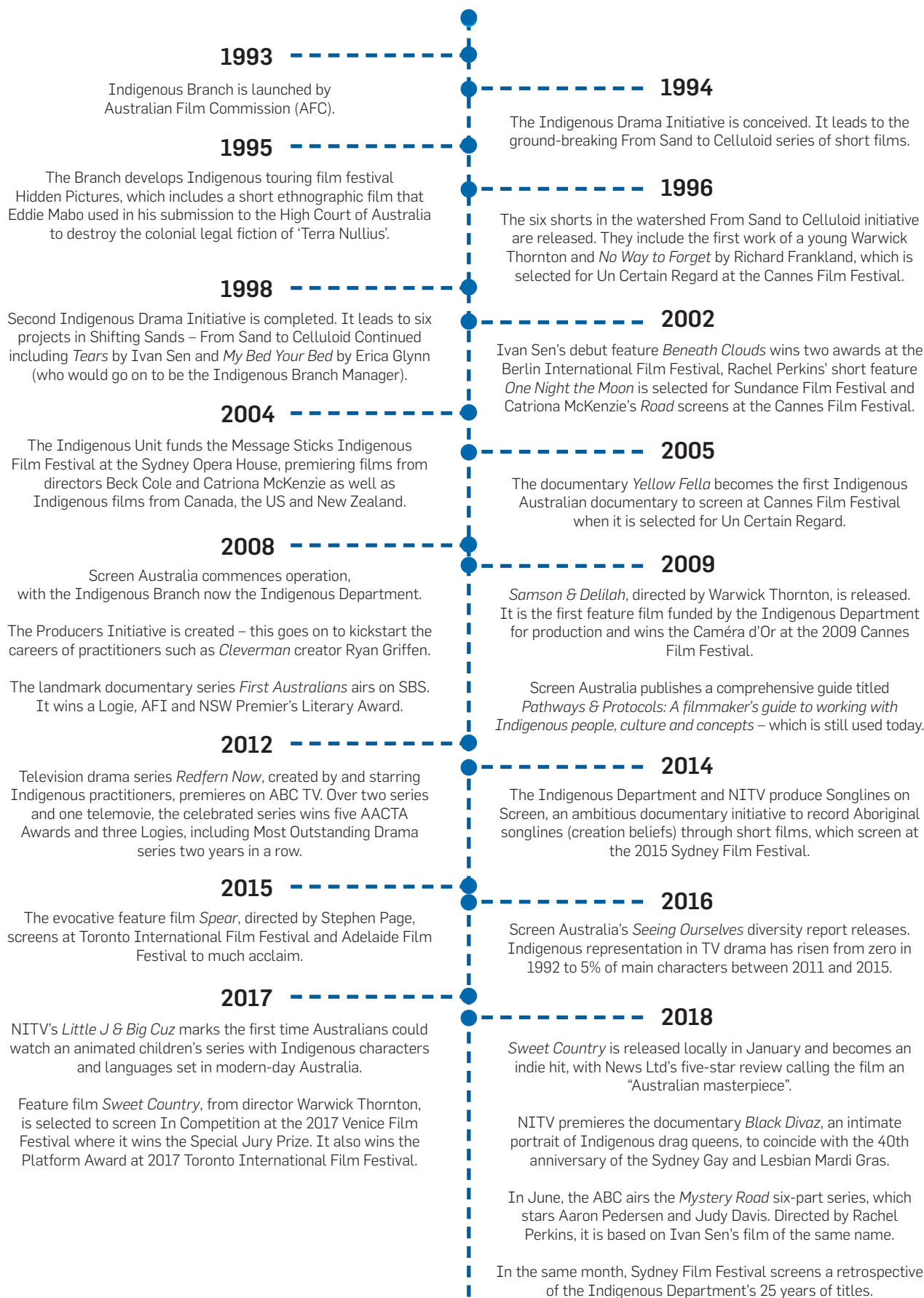
partnership with the ABC's Indigenous Unit, NITV/SBS, the state agencies and the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS).

One of the department's core responsibilities has been to support emerging and developed talent. While this focus remains critical, it is important to consider that as overall competition for funding increases, the need for Indigenous voices to be heard has never been more important. A greater level of balance between the focus of Screen Australia's responsibilities, the state agencies, the guilds, AFTRS and SPA is required to ensure Indigenous screen practitioners are supported at all career phases. Equally, those voices must continue to be supported to meet the high standards of craft demanded by audiences who are increasingly empowered by digital on-demand options.

“They've been incredibly effective in supporting the new – or first wave – of Indigenous cinema from a standing start.

Stakeholder research interviews undertaken by PWC

INDIGENOUS DEPARTMENT TIMELINE



Key challenges to be considered

Competition for Screen Australia funding is increasing. This poses a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order for the Indigenous Department to continue to be successful. The potential impact and complexity of these challenges speak to a broader and growing need for an Indigenous screen advisory body to bring together the Indigenous screen industry – whether formally or informally – with the objective to increase the efficacy and impact of Indigenous stories.

FRAGMENTATION IN THE SECTOR

Like the screen industry at large, the Indigenous sector faces a number of challenges through the fragmentation of approach, funding and strategy across the multiple government and private agencies in the sector. There are areas of overlap and notable gaps in the activities and remits of various public and private organisations. For talent, this is contributing to confusion about the opportunities available to practitioners and the process of accessing support. This can challenge their capacity to remain in the industry full-time. For the organisations, it demonstrates a missed opportunity to take advantage of synergies and shared goals within the sector.

Opportunity for Screen Australia's Indigenous Department:

Help coordinate the approach to Indigenous screen funding and talent development across public and private sectors to increase the impact of the combined spend and approach of all agencies.

UNCLEAR AND UNSUSTAINABLE TALENT PATHWAYS

Pathways for talent through the industry are unclear and, according to participants, challenging to navigate. This can cause skilled practitioners to drop out early due to either lack of clarity on how to advance their careers, or lack of opportunities to do so. A disconnect between the number of people that reach a mid-career phase and those that become established practitioners is also a key issue that needs to be addressed. It's clear more needs to be done in supporting screen practitioners moving from grassroots, to emerging, to mid-career and finally into advanced.

Opportunity for Screen Australia's Indigenous Department:

Create a clear talent pathway – and an even better understanding of where each agency focuses its attention and funding. This is a key opportunity for the Indigenous Department in its leadership and coordination role. A transparent, collaborative and open approach will not only benefit the participants, but also the development of the sector as a whole.

ACCESS TO FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Some government agencies face sustained funding challenges, and the broader industry's financial models have been profoundly disrupted by digital sources such as Netflix, Amazon, Stan, Facebook, YouTube and Apple. Production costs have also

increased across most film and television formats. An increase in the number of Indigenous screen practitioners in Australia, without an increase to the department's budget, creates new challenges. Whilst the Indigenous Department of Screen Australia has a remit to service the national Indigenous screen sector, they are challenged by the need to consistently and effectively reach all potential talent and to find the right projects that meet the needs of both talent, and funding providers.

The rise of video on demand has empowered audiences and increased their desire for quality content. This provides a profound opportunity for the industry, but has fundamentally disrupted project budgets and business models, putting further strain on funding allocations and creating new global expectations and requirements for screen storytellers.

Opportunity for Screen Australia's Indigenous Department:

The Indigenous Department has been able to maintain a budget of \$3.3 million, but it is clear that more is expected from this funding, along with a sustained need to increase the department's budget. With an increased budget, the department will be able to further facilitate opportunities for Indigenous writers, directors and producers to create and tell stories on traditional and new platforms, while pursuing new funding avenues and relationships with local and international partners. Increased corporate and philanthropic funding can also help to drive the sector forward.

MAINTAINING A STRONG INDIGENOUS VOICE AND DRIVING ADVOCACY

There is growing concern that there is a lack of Indigenous representatives – both as employees and at leadership levels – in a number of agencies and partners in the screen industry, as well as government. While there are promising initiatives and strong commitments to Indigenous screen funding across Australia, this lack of a 'seat at the table' presents a challenge to ensuring the sustainability and long-term future of the sector.

Opportunity for Screen Australia's Indigenous Department:

The opportunity for the Indigenous Department to maintain an advocacy approach is critical for the sector as it is one of the few sector participants that can have direct conversations with key funding sources including broadcasters, new platforms, the Federal Government, state agencies and other sector stakeholders.

Screen Australia's Indigenous Department welcomes the March 2019 appointment of Deborah Mailman to Screen Australia's Board. Ms Mailman is the second Indigenous Australian to serve on Screen Australia's Board: producer, director and writer Rachel Perkins was part of Screen Australia's founding Board in 2008. Further to this, Minister Ken Wyatt is Australia's first Federal Aboriginal Minister for Indigenous Australians. This major step forward is one that will be embraced by the Indigenous screen community, and will begin to address the concerns highlighted above.



Toomelah

Five strategic pillars

Extensive consultation with recipients of Screen Australia funding, Indigenous members of the creative and film community, state and territory agencies, broadcasters, and other key screen sector partners, has led to the creation of five strategic pillars that address the challenges and opportunities facing the sector:

1. **Indigenous storytelling**
2. **Identifying stories and talent**
3. **Developing talent**
4. **Connecting talent**
5. **Advocating for Indigenous representation and leadership.**

These pillars will underpin the department's future efforts, forming the basis for the department's strategic decisions, including allocations of funding, in the short, medium and long term.

1. STORYTELLING

Continue to tell compelling Indigenous stories on screen that show craft, embrace varied formats and exceed the expectations of audiences, including Indigenous communities.

Description

The Indigenous Department will continue to prioritise supporting Indigenous-authored, created and produced content for screen, whether that be through traditional cinema and television channels, or through new platforms such as Streaming Video On Demand (SVOD) services. This content will demonstrate the craft of the key people involved, with the added objective of utilising new and emerging formats. The department will endeavor to improve how research and insights are provided that can inform story creation and distribution – particularly research that considers the Indigenous community.

Importance and context

For 25 years, the Indigenous Department has assisted Indigenous content creators to have a voice and place on screens, to share stories throughout Australia and beyond while developing a commercially viable sector. This work is challenged by digital disruption, fragmented pathways and funding constraints, but can be supported by innovative financing and storytelling and greater coordination across agencies. As the industry changes and agencies refocus to keep pace, it will be vital to maintain focus on stories that continue to balance cultural relevance and commercial impact, while ensuring the creation of content reaches all audience age groups.

Focus areas

The focus areas for this pillar are to ensure the development of craft and capability in those entering into the sector, and to ensure that all stories being developed for screen have the potential to be heard both within Indigenous communities, and by mainstream audiences.



Rachel Perkins, Warwick Thornton, Dylan River, Leah Purcell and Ivan Sen

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MEASUREMENT AREAS

<p>Short-term (within two years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster the development of emerging and established writers and directors from a diverse pool of Indigenous talent through two to four targeted national programs and ongoing development funding rounds. • Ensure that important and diverse Indigenous stories are told without losing authenticity, by using both internal and external Indigenous funding assessors. • Encourage producers to explore and bring new platforms and channels to market by creating networking opportunities, funding support for travel and continue the biannual Indigenous delegation trip to LA in partnership with Australians in Film. • Support Indigenous production companies through Enterprise programs and producer placements.
<p>Medium-term (within five years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the depth of talent writing, directing and producing across multiple platforms by working closely with all state and territory funding agencies, industry associations, SPA and the guilds through the National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development. • Broaden the type of stories being told, to add depth of understanding of contemporary Indigenous Australians by funding a broad range of screen content across all platforms, with a focus on SVODs and other online content providers. • Initiate strategic partnerships for fundraising that establish an Indigenous Screen Fund. • Explore the possibility of a long-running series/format that continues to paint a clear and engaging picture of contemporary Indigenous life, while providing professional development opportunities for mid-career filmmakers.

Strategic enablers

The key enablers for this pillar include:

- improving collaboration with organisations to identify, nurture and jointly fund promising concepts
- enabling practitioners to develop a robust relationship with key platforms and channels both locally and internationally
- increasing funding and finding new funding partners to undertake more exploratory, experimental and innovative content.

Investment

For the next three years, Screen Australia's Indigenous Department envisages allocating around \$2.5 to 3 million of its yearly program budget to address this strategic pillar. The increased budget allocation of \$4 million for the 2019/20 financial year will greatly assist the department. However, we will still need to investigate other avenues in which to increase overall production funding for Indigenous screen stories.

2. IDENTIFYING

Actively identify Indigenous stories and storytellers from a range of voices and support the development of storytelling craft.

Description

The Indigenous Department will continue to seek Indigenous Australians' voices and stories by proactively engaging with other agencies in the sector and monitoring a range of talent in key creative roles. This will support the sustainability of storytelling by investing in relevant and meaningful initiatives and projects that will develop skills and craft.

Importance and context

Growing the pool of talented Indigenous filmmakers – and ensuring that it includes a diverse mix of people from Indigenous communities – enriches the sector and supports its sustainability. However, screen agencies and key partners are not currently coordinating the identification and tracking of talent, and moves to do so would be constrained by existing resources. The sector's growing engagement through this review presents an opportunity for the department to coordinate a collaborative approach, which will better identify talent and businesses.

Focus areas

This pillar will focus on enabling talent to enter the industry by clarifying and circulating agreed definitions for various stages of the talent pipeline, and clarifying and improving the processes around identifying and supporting grassroots, emerging and mid-career talent throughout Australia.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MEASUREMENT AREAS

<p>Short-term (within two years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a unified definition of talent development – a Talent Development Pathway – which clearly identifies talent at each stage and outlines their development needs, and align this with key sector partners. • Create a National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development across the various stakeholders to reduce duplication of effort and to identify new and emerging talent. The framework will ensure all parties are regularly communicating about funding opportunities, joint special initiatives, identification of new talent and the tracking of career development. • Continue to support strategic professional placements for writers, directors and producers within state and territory agencies, broadcasters, community media organisations, and both local and international production companies. • Implement a strong communication plan to ensure the Indigenous Department is engaging with potential Indigenous screen practitioners in all urban, regional and remote areas.
<p>Medium-term (within five years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with state agencies as they refine their own strategy to ensure consistency in approach and the achievement of nationally agreed objectives as part of the National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development. • Consolidate broadcaster support through repeatable, long-term opportunities for writers, directors and producers. • Explore other corporate and philanthropic funding opportunities for paid local and international professional residencies (with learning goals) and career development. • Review the National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development to ensure the Talent Development Pathway is increasing the number of skilled creatives in all states and territories.

Strategic enablers

Critical to this collaborative approach to new talent identification will be an agreement as to the role of each agency in developing talent, and agreed definitions for each stage of career development. A starting point for collaboration on this definition matrix is provided as in Appendix 1. Also crucial is extra funding for the development of key programs and for the National Indigenous Professional Development Framework.

Investment

For the next three years, Screen Australia's Indigenous Department envisages allocating \$200,000 to \$500,000 of its yearly program budget to address this strategic pillar. In order to implement the recommendations of this strategic pillar, the department will require an increased staffing allocation, or refocus the job duties of one of the department's current staff.

3 DEVELOPING

Actively understand and develop clear and sustainable pathways for key talent in the Indigenous screen sector.

Description

The Indigenous Department will continuously and proactively monitor the ways that key creative talent are progressing through the Indigenous screen sector, to ensure that talent are reaching advanced levels and create sustainable careers. Once screen practitioners have been identified and entered the industry, pathways to long-term careers must be supported. Insights into talent pathways will be developed and shared in collaboration with agencies and partners in the sector, to maximise resources and synergies for the benefit of practitioners.

Importance and context

A key insight from research into the sector is that talented individuals – once identified and working in the industry – are dropping out due to unsustainable opportunities in work, or lack of clarity on how to progress. Contributing factors include the growing digital disruption of the industry and lack of knowledge in regards to how best engage with SVODs. Also duplication and lack of synergies in the offering of professional development initiatives nationally created missed opportunities across agencies. A consistent effort to understand and address this will enable more storytellers to remain in the sector and develop their craft through reliable, diverse and evolving work opportunities. This will also limit the duplication of effort by agencies in the sector by identifying gaps and enabling more meaningful partnerships, including opportunities with emerging platforms.

“If we can join all of those dots together, you can have a really cohesive throughline.

Kelrick Martin, ABC Indigenous Unit

Focus areas

The focus of this pillar will be to develop a national talent strategy with input from partners and practitioners in the sector. The Indigenous Department will seek public commitment from partners to ensure the strategy is a meaningful endeavour that will make a practical, positive impact on practitioners, with a goal to see more sustained careers in the sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MEASUREMENT AREAS

<p>Short-term (within two years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development across the various stakeholders to reduce duplication of effort and to fill gaps where key talent may be falling out of the system. The framework will ensure all parties are regularly communicating about funding opportunities, joint special initiatives, discovery of new talent and the tracking of career development. • Continue to support strategic professional development placements for writers, directors and producers within state and territory agencies, broadcasters, community media organisations, and both local and international production companies. • Work with production companies and broadcasters to obtain commitment for dedicated Indigenous opportunities, which may involve the use of special initiatives and activities that sit outside of funding guidelines. • As part of the Talent Development Pathway, create a mentoring scheme to support the development of talent from grassroots, to emerging, to mid-career, and into established stages of development.
<p>Medium-term (within five years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an exchange program with international production companies for one to two Indigenous practitioners per year. • Initiate a discussion paper regarding Indigenous employment in key creative roles across Australian screen content. • Develop a formal system to monitor Indigenous writers, directors and producers as they progress along the Talent Development Pathway. • Explore other corporate and philanthropic funding opportunities for paid local and international professional residencies (with learning goals) and career development. • Review the National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development to ensure the Talent Development Pathway is increasing the number of skilled creatives in all states and territories.

Strategic enablers

Maintaining productive and working relationships with industry, state agencies, broadcasters, and the wider Screen Australia will help unlock opportunities for closer collaboration. A focus on providing high-quality developmental feedback will help support development of talent.

“... what's missing is... identifying the people who are coming through and matching them to programs and opportunities.

Kingston Anderson, Australian Directors' Guild

Investment

For the next three years, Screen Australia's Indigenous Department envisages allocating \$200,000 to \$500,000 of its yearly program budget to address this strategic pillar. In order to implement the recommendations of this strategic pillar, the department will require an increased staffing allocation, or refocus the job duties of one of the department's current staff.

4 CONNECTING

Take a leadership role in facilitating communication and connection with other industry groups across the Indigenous screen sector.

Description

The Indigenous Department will use its connections as a federal body to better facilitate information sharing and communication across the industry. It will coordinate agencies within the sector in its efforts to identify and nurture talent, as well as develop and produce content, with a view to build a more sustainable industry.

Importance and context

A key theme from research into the sector was a failure among agencies to communicate regularly and meaningfully. This is contributing to fragmentation and gaps in talent development and production of content. Further, it limits agencies in the sector from taking advantage of potential synergies and partnerships, which are increasingly important as funding becomes more competitive and in some cases, constrained. The Indigenous Department is uniquely positioned to take leadership in this space: it has the industry connections and remit.

“I love the idea of bringing people together and sharing those learnings – not just federal to state but between states. We have people who cross borders where their country is – where their nation is.

Tracey Vieira and Jo Dillon, Screen Queensland

Focus areas

The core focus for this pillar will be to improve and formalise communication with partners in the sector. This will be specifically directed at government agencies, guilds, broadcasters and production companies to ensure a regular rhythm and way of working that makes a more meaningful impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MEASUREMENT AREAS

Short-term (within one year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a regular operating rhythm for the department to share its strategy and communicate regularly with key sector partners throughout the year, as an initial step towards a framework. Work with external stakeholders to ensure representation at key industry conferences and festivals, locally and abroad, as well as governmental meetings and forums. Examine the Indigenous Department's capacity to take a leadership role in this area.
Medium-term (within two years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a National Framework for Indigenous Professional Development across the various stakeholders to reduce duplication of effort and to fill gaps where key talent may be falling out of the system. The framework will ensure all parties are regularly communicating about funding opportunities, joint special initiatives, discovery of new talent – particularly in regional and remote areas – and the tracking of career development. Establish advocates to support the Indigenous screen strategy and its outcomes. Create deeper connection with international markets, festivals and Indigenous screen sectors. Collaborate with all agencies on a biannual Indigenous key creatives summit: a proposed two-day conference which would begin in 2020 and be hosted in a different state or territory on each occasion. The summit will build understanding and consensus around the National Framework for Professional Development and allow practitioners to build networks, liaise with funding bodies and industry, and build their craft.
Long-term (within five years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strive to have an Indigenous board member and Indigenous employment at all screen agencies.

Strategic enablers

A business development mindset will help to build and deepen these external relationships. Regular communications will create a platform for strategic and sustained collaborations. The department envisages this will require engaging or employing specialist talent.

Investment

For the next three years, Screen Australia's Indigenous Department envisages allocating around \$200,000 of its yearly program budget to address this strategic pillar.

5. **ADVOCATING**

Ensure that the voices of Indigenous storytellers and filmmakers remain relevant, heard, seen and valued.

Description

One of the Indigenous Department's core roles is to assist Indigenous storytellers to take their voices onto the screen. The department and content creators play a fundamental role in advancing the representation and voices of Indigenous peoples throughout the wider industry, and in leadership positions and conversations. This advocacy promotes Indigenous stories and storytellers, continued support for the unit, and representation at decision-making tables around the world.

“No stories about us, without us.”

Importance and context

Maintaining the current momentum in the Indigenous screen sector will require advocacy at two levels – as a voice in the broader screen industry, as well as within top leadership. There are partnerships and funding support that exist beyond the standard parameters of the sector which can only be taken advantage of with a proactive and unified approach. At a leadership level, having strong and embedded voices to advocate for the importance of the Indigenous screen sector will assist in future-proofing and developing the industry beyond what it is today. This advocacy must extend beyond the screen sector, and reach around the world. It will be crucial as the sector navigates the fundamental challenges brought by digital disruption, and harnesses the opportunities created by empowered audiences and the growing recognition and success of Indigenous screen stories.

Focus areas

The focus of this pillar is growing the sector by strengthening the Indigenous leadership voices at senior levels and in the wider screen industry. This will require commitment to a proactive and formalised approach to communication and leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MEASUREMENT AREAS

Short-term (within two years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and establish national advocates for the Indigenous screen sector, who will provide input on policy affecting the Indigenous screen sector and the sector more broadly.• Continue to utilise the Strategic Reference Group for advice and advocacy (Two meetings per year).
Medium-term (within five years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiate strategic partnerships for fundraising that establish an Indigenous Screen Fund.• Promote Indigenous talent for key industry positions and advise on strategies for succession planning.• Provide advice to ensure all agencies have strong Indigenous governance to oversee their local funding activities.

Strategic enablers

Support from producers and other practitioners, industry organisations, festivals and the screen community, as well as state and territory screen agencies, is required for a clear and coherent message to create policy impacts.

Strategic enablers

Strategic pillar	Summary of enablers
<p>Storytelling</p> <p>Continue to tell compelling Indigenous stories on screen that show craft, embrace varied formats and exceed the expectations of audiences and the Indigenous communities.</p>	<p>Improving collaboration with organisations to identify, nurture and jointly fund promising concepts. Also enabling practitioners to develop a robust relationship with key platforms and channels both locally and internationally. Increasing funding to undertake more exploratory, experimental and innovative content.</p>
<p>Identifying</p> <p>Actively identify Indigenous stories and storytellers from a range of voices and support the development of storytelling craft.</p>	<p>Critical to this collaborative approach to new talent identification will be an agreement as to the role of each agency in developing talent, and agreed definitions for each stage of career development. A starting point for collaboration on this definition matrix is provided in Appendix 1. Also crucial is extra funding for the development of key programs and the National Framework Indigenous Professional Development.</p>
<p>Developing</p> <p>Actively understand and develop clear and sustainable pathways for key talent in the Indigenous screen sector.</p>	<p>Maintaining productive and working relationships with industry, state agencies, broadcasters, and the wider Screen Australia will help unlock opportunities for closer collaboration. A focus on providing high-quality developmental feedback will help support development of talent.</p>
<p>Connecting</p> <p>Take a leadership role in facilitating communication and connection with other industry groups across the Indigenous screen sector.</p>	<p>A business development mindset will help to build and deepen these external relationships. Regular communications will create a platform for strategic and sustained collaborations. The department envisages this will require engaging or employing specialist talent.</p>
<p>Advocating</p> <p>Ensure that the voice of Indigenous storytellers and filmmakers remain relevant, heard, seen and valued.</p>	<p>Support from producers and other practitioners, industry organisations, festivals and the screen community, as well as state and territory screen agencies, is required for a clear and coherent message to create policy impacts.</p>



Mystery Road

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Indigenous screen sector is experiencing the benefit of decades of focus, dedication and support. This era of exceptional filmmaking and talent development has also created a greater appreciation and appetite for Indigenous stories across local and global audiences.

Maintaining and building upon this positive platform has been at the front of mind for Screen Australia's Indigenous Department while setting a strategy for 2019 and beyond. To create the most relevant and impactful strategy, the department developed strategic priorities in conjunction with a range of stakeholders across the sector. This approach will foster a level of confidence in, and commitment to, delivering on these objectives in a collaborative way.

The Indigenous Department of Screen Australia recognises the contribution of the many people who participated in the development of these priorities, the majority of whom are listed below. We are grateful for the constructive and positive manner in which the stakeholders entered the co-design program and for their passionate and informed views about where and how the department should focus in the future.

Engagement phase	Participants	
Strategic Reference Group	Kodie Bedford Lauren Brannigan-Onato Lee-Ann Buckskin Dena Curtis Anusha Duray Darren Dale Aaron Fa'aoso Erica Glynn John Harvey Ismail Khan	Ian Ludwick Deborah Mailman Kelrick Martin Gillian Moody Trisha Morton-Thomas Tanya Orman Rachel Perkins Mitchell Stanley Douglas Watkin Dot West
Indigenous Screen Sector Engagement	Penelope McDonald Kyas Sherriff John Harvey Graeme Mason Jodie Bell Erica Glynn Mitchell Stanley	Sophia Zachariou Sally Riley Pauline Clague Sally Ingleton Tony Briggs Aaron Fa'aoso Jo Dillon
Screen Sector Engagement	NITV – Tanya Orman Australian Directors' Guild – Kingston Anderson Screenwest – Seph McKenna, Devina McPherson, Rikki Lea Bestall Screen Queensland – Tracey Vieira SPA – Matthew Deaner, Brad Taylor	Screen Tasmania – Alex Sangston Film Victoria – Caroline Pitcher, Jana Blair AFTRS – Neil Peplow ABC – Kelrick Martin, Alastair McKinnon Create NSW - Sally Regan

Appendix 1

POTENTIAL TALENT DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

Historically, screen agencies, industry and partners have independently created talent development programs. While many of these programs have been successful, this fragmented approach means there is no shared understanding of talent development, and no coordinated pathway for practitioners. The Department proposes to work collaboratively to create a Talent Development Pathway. This pathway is proposed as a key element of a national framework that will support greater cooperation between screen agencies.

To track career development across the key creative disciplines, screen agencies, industry and partners will need shared definitions of various stages of development. Once these stages are defined, partners can agree on areas of need, and create programs that target those areas which are clear and accessible for potential applicants and partners.

The following table presents an initial view on how career development phases can be defined. The categories are intended to indicate a level of expertise. They should not be used prescriptively, to 'pigeon hole' talent or create programs that cannot adapt to new opportunities. It will be important for any talent development program to cater for individuals that work across multiple disciplines – for example, an established director may be an emerging writer.



TALENT DEFINITION

	Grassroots	Emerging	Mid-career	Established
Writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated interest • No credits • Non-funded • Completing various screen practitioner courses and internships • Making some online content with no funding or sponsorship • No screen networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want it as a career path • Have industry experience • 1–2 credits in related roles • Actively applying for funding at the state and federal level • Beginning to pitch to broadcasters and or other platforms • Attending various screen conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating opportunities and earning a living • Independently creating opportunities with their brand networks • Writing across TV drama series, online series and features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing for opportunities on ambitious productions • Ongoing opportunities in Australia and overseas • Signed by a major agency • Sought after
Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated interest • No credits • Non-funded • Completing various screen practitioner courses and internships • Making some online content with no funding or sponsorship • No screen networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want it as a career path • Have industry experience • 1–2 credits in related roles • Actively applying for funding at the state and federal level • Beginning to pitch to broadcasters and or other platforms • Attending various screen conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sophisticated productions (e.g. bigger crews, budgets and responsibility) • Some critical success with awards and international festivals • Working on various TV Drama series • About to or have just completed a first feature film, or factual series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious productions (e.g. bigger crews, budgets and responsibility) • Ongoing opportunities in Australia and overseas • Signed by a major agency • Sought after
Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-funded • Have completed studies • First timer • Cross-over producers • Online content creator • No network or industry knowledge and relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credited • Funded • Demonstrated trajectory of work w/out funding (e.g. YouTube) • Narrative-based content • Expansion of network and knowledge • An understanding and practice of physical producing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadcaster relationships established • Funding body relationships • Building market relations • “Physical producing” (meaningful, not associate) • Slate of projects in development • Building own company or partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital to invest • Slate of projects • Approached for EP roles • Own company • Competitive for SA Enterprise funding • International investment and sales on a range of content • Commercial and critical success with funded content
Tech/Crew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest • Looking for opportunities • Some training / internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to sustain full-time living • Employed in junior crew roles • Building pathway – moving up ladder • Credited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained income • Industry recognition • Agent • Slate of upcoming projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booked consistently • Expensive – higher rates • Sought after • Agent • Awards

Appendix 2

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017/18

The Indigenous Department delivered across all key KPIs in 2017/18, with support being provided to a range of practitioners and projects.

- \$2.2 million in development and production funding across documentaries, feature, online, TV and special initiatives
- \$374,857 for practitioner development including internships, special industry assistance and travel support
- \$550,000 in business support to seven companies.

KEY OBJECTIVES DELIVERED AGAINST 2017/18

<p>At least one major Indigenous feature film or television drama series to proceed to production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mystery Road</i> TV series • Shock Treatment – horror anthology
<p>One major Indigenous factual project or series to achieve free-to-air broadcast and/or a commitment from an online platform.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>She Who Must Be Loved</i> (feature documentary) – NITV • <i>State of Alarm</i> (factual series, 3 x 30') – NITV • <i>Black Divaz</i> (60') – NITV • <i>TransBlack</i> series (5 x 5') – ABC iview • <i>Straight out of the Straits</i> (5 x 5') – ABC iview
<p>At least 10 opportunities for professional development for Indigenous practitioners, including creative workshops, internships, mentoring programs and travel grants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock Treatment (Short Drama Initiative) Development Workshop – 8 writer / directors attended • Shock Treatment (Short Drama Initiative) Working with Actors Workshop – 5 directors attended • State of Alarm (Documentary Initiative) – Development Workshop – 8 teams attended (teams included a director and producer), 16 practitioners in total • Short Blacks (Short Drama Initiative) – 2 Development Workshops • Developing the Developer Workshop (story workshop) – 8 practitioners attended the 3-day workshop run by the department in collaboration with Louise Gough • 14 travel grants • 8 internships – including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature film <i>Top End Wedding</i> (4 internships) • Seesaw (Dena Curtis) • Matchbox (Shakara Walley) • Causeway Films (Mitch Stanley) • <i>The Heights</i> (Darlene Johnson) • <i>Mystery Road</i> (Jub Clark)
<p>Developed and created 1–2 initiatives per year that focused on professional development opportunities for emerging Indigenous practitioners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Alarm: factual initiative focusing on emerging writer/directors in regional and remote areas, looking at Indigenous knowledge and climate change. • Shock Treatment: short drama initiative, partnership with ABC, focus on writers and directors. Funded 5 x 15' minute horror films for ABC iview.

Several titles funded by the department achieved notable success in 2017/18. *Sweet Country* won the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival, the Platform Prize at the Toronto International Film Festival, and Best Feature at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards. *Mystery Road* averaged 1.3 million metro and regional viewers across its six first-release episodes, as well as 338,000 viewers through encore screenings, and became ABC iView's most streamed drama (excluding children's titles).

The feature documentary *She Who Must Be Loved*, premiered at the 2018 Adelaide Film Festival, winning the audience award. The documentary had its international premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2019.

Both *Sweet Country* and *Mystery Road* enjoyed considerable success at the 2018 AACTA Awards.

Sweet Country won six categories:

- Best Film
- Best Direction
- Best Lead Actor
- Best Original Screenplay
- Best Cinematography
- Best Editing.

Mystery Road won five categories:

- Best Drama Series
- Best Editing in Television
- Best Original Music Score in Television
- Best Guest or Supporting Actor
- Best Guest or Supporting Actress.

¹ Source: OzTAM and RegionalTAM, 5-city-metro, combined markets, total people, average audience, consolidated 28. Metro viewers (1st release) = 846,000 ; Metro viewers (encores) = 236,000 VPM source: OzTAM Video Player Measurement – 28 day. Metropolitan data is copyright to OzTAM and Regional data is copyright to RegionalTAM and may not be reproduced, published or communicated in whole or part without the prior consent of OzTAM or RegionalTAM.
iView statistic courtesy of the ABC.



Spear